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Grain and Feed

Japan Establishes New Standards for Health Claims on Pet food

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Report Highlights:

On April 11, 2008, new standards governing the appropriate use of health claims on pet food labels came into force in Japan. The standards, which relate to the human Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, emphasize the use of claims that indicate "maintenance" of health rather than "improvement". While the overall impression from industry is that the standards are not a hindrance, there remains concern over MAFF's interpretation of the law that subjects any pre-existing English language claims on product to the same standards.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Trade Report
Tokyo [JA1]
[JA]

MAFF Established Health Claim Standards for Pet Food

After experiencing difficulties responding to a possible pet food recall in 2007, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has embarked on establishing new pet food standards. One such standards corresponds with the human health regulations related to what types of health claims can be made on pet food products.

On April 11, 2008, MAFF established Standards Regarding the Range of Pharmaceuticals and Quasi-Drug Products for Animals (19, Food Safety and Consumer Affairs Bureau, No. 14,721), the first set of standards governing the appropriate use of the health claims on pet food. The standards became effective on April 11, 2008. The standards are intended to assist the pet food industry to avoid violating [the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law](#) (2005) with respect to labeling pet food products. Overall, the standards allow claims that indicate maintenance of health rather than improvement of health or claims that imply a direct causal relationship between the food and an effect on the body. Prior to establishing the standards, MAFF consulted with the industry whose comments are generally reflected in the standards. For example, certain labels that were not permitted by MAFF under the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law are now permitted under the new standards, such as "Taurine for Healthy Eyes" and "Glutamine helps keep joints healthy." MAFF previously did not permit labels to use the term "immunity." However under the new standards "immunity" may be used as a part of an explanation such as "Maintains animals' natural immunities by maintaining good health." Icons, too, are now permitted to be included in the label if they are accompanied with an appropriate explanation.

However, a few concerns remain. Because the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law does not specify what language(s) are governed by the standards for use on pet food labels, MAFF believes that any language used is subject to the law. Some pet food companies import pet food products (e.g., breeder packs) into Japan with the original English language labeling on the package. Because claims or expressions in English may be statements that conflict with the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, it is possible that the customs official may detain these products. Industry representatives have suggested that one solution is to check only Japanese language labeling if the labeling includes both Japanese and English language. However, thus far MAFF has indicated they will maintain their current interpretation of the law.